



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia & Kings Canyon  
National Parks

47050 Generals Highway  
Three Rivers, CA 93271

559 565-3703 phone  
559 565-3789 fax

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## Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks

### Fire Information Reaches Community during the Hidden Fire



*The Hidden Fire was highly visible to gateway communities. NPS photo*

On Wednesday September 10, a thunderstorm passed over Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and ignited the Hidden Fire. The fire was located in an area of deep, heavy fuels and steep terrain approximately 12 miles north of the community of Three Rivers.

Aggressive and immediate fire suppression was necessary as this fire had potential to spread rapidly into developed areas including private lands outside the park as well as developments within the park. However, fire managers pulled firefighters from the direct attack effort when the terrain became a safety issue for firefighters. They implemented indirect attack strategies using

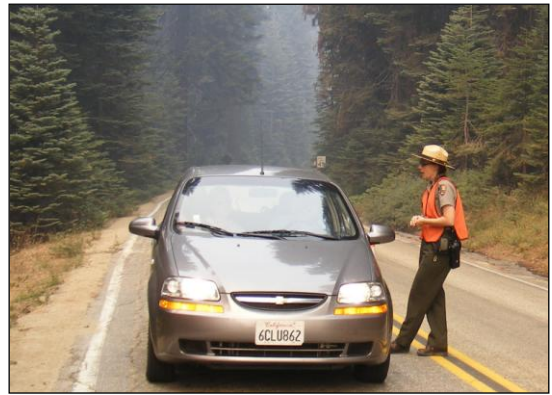
aerial and ground resources to conduct burnout operations, including along the Generals Highway, to remove fuels from the advancing fire and to strengthen control lines. The Hidden Fire was successfully contained to 3,685 acres on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

During the fire, the fire information office worked to ensure the local communities were aware of the parks' response. The parks' information officers began talking to the community of Three Rivers on September 11, even though the fire was only seven acres in size, because they understood that this fire had significant potential for spread. As the fire progressed, the information office extended outreach to Lemon Cove, Woodlake, the little hamlet of Badger, and the communities within the parks and neighboring national forest.

These parks have a long and proud history of prescribed and managed fire. However, the initial outreach was critical, as many people doubted that the parks were suppressing this fire. This fire was an excellent reminder for employees and residents alike that suppression is a necessary tool the parks use when lives and property are at risk.

A community meeting was scheduled in Three Rivers and attended by a group of 39 concerned citizens. This meeting offered fire managers from the park and the incident management team to provide valuable information on the tactics and strategies being used to suppress the fire and to notify residents that smoke from this fire could affect local communities.

During the burnout operations, the information team again worked quickly and closely with parks maintenance and law enforcement staff to establish traffic control on a two-mile stretch of the road, allowing the highway to remain open with minimal traffic impacts. Information officers were present to speak to visitors regarding the fire operations during the short delays in traffic. Entrance stations and visitor centers also provided information to insure the widest dissemination.



*A park employee talks to visitors during traffic control along the Generals Highway. The parks remained open throughout the fire. NPS photo*

This pro-active approach to provide updated and accurate information helped visitors understand and plan their visit to the parks during the Hidden Fire and helped local residents understand the response and the impacts the fire would have on the community.

“Timely public information was critical to the success of this fire,” according to Fire Management Officer Dave Bartlett. “The information staff understood that this highly visible fire would be a concern to our gateway communities and park visitors and made every effort to get accurate information out on a regular basis. I am proud of their effort and accomplishments.”

Although managers suppressed this fire, ecological benefits were many. The Hidden Fire cleared and restored the forest to a more natural condition. This will encourage new growth and provide greater diversity for both plants and animals. The last recorded fire history for much of the fire area was in the 1920s. This forest historically experienced fire approximately every 15 years. Low intensity ground fire that removed surface fuels with occasional pockets of torching was observed—fire behavior typical in the mixed conifer forests of the Sierra Nevada.

**Contact: Alex Olow, Forestry Technician Fire Education and Prevention**  
**Phone: (559) 565--4287**